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## A Rapid Review of Literature on Factors Associated with Adult Probation Revocations

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### ABSTRACT

Criminal justice stakeholders have increasingly relied on probation supervision as an alternative to incarceration and yet, probation revocations often result in incarceration. As such, increased understanding of the mechanisms behind revocations and strategies to reduce them is critical. We conduct a rapid review of the literature on factors associated with probation revocations. Specifically, we review 50 articles on how probation officer behavior, officer-client relationships, caseload size, supervision intensity, monetary sanctions, probation client characteristics, or programming and services are associated with probation revocations. Though the literature is limited, and findings are mixed, the most consistent findings indicate that officer-client relationships involving trust, support, respect, and empathy as well as reduced caseload sizes and cognitive behavioral therapy programs are associated with probation success while intensive supervision programs; greater monetary sanctions and nonpayment of those sanctions; and being Black and less educated are associated with poorer supervision outcomes. Implications for future research, policy, and practice are discussed.

### KEYWORDS

Probation; recidivism; community corrections; relationships; substance abuse

## Introduction

In an era of decarceration in the United States (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019; Petersilia & Cullen, 2014), strategies to divert offenders away from prison and into the community are being utilized more frequently than in prior years (Glaze & Bonczar, 2009). One of the most common strategies to divert individuals away from prison is probation (American Correctional Association, 2006). Most criminal justice stakeholders assert that the purpose of modern probation is to rehabilitate justice-involved individuals in their communities by encouraging prosocial behavior; yet, some subscribe to a more punitive philosophy emphasizing deterrence over rehabilitation (Brilliant, 1989; Skeem & Manchak, 2008).

Despite the fact that probation is increasingly relied upon as a strategy for diverting justice-involved individuals away from more punitive prison sanctions, individuals under supervision still often end up experiencing incarceration. When probation clients violate

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supervision conditions, such as attending meetings with a probation officer and not being rearrested, the term of supervision can be revoked and may result in incarceration. Prior research indicates that approximately two-thirds of probation clients are arrested for a new charge during or after their term of probation, often resulting in revocation even if the charges are later dropped (Jalbert et al., 2010; Petersilia et al., 1986). Yet, probation serves both rehabilitative as well as supervisory functions. Understanding the mechanisms driving probation revocations may help inform strategies to reduce them and better fulfill the goals of the probationary period.

There is a critical need for timely information on the factors associated with probation revocations that extends beyond the goals for rehabilitation. Such knowledge can inform national initiatives that are currently examining probation revocations, such as the Arnold Ventures Reducing Revocations Challenge (CUNY, n.d.). Knowledge on factors associated with revocations is also relevant to current conversations on reducing racial and ethnic disparities in criminal-legal processing (e.g., see, Crutchfield et al., 2010), longstanding concerns regarding recidivism, and recent growing concern over the impacts of monetary sanctions (Harris, 2016). Moreover, there is a lack of synthesis of probation revocation literature beyond highly specific systematic reviews and meta-analytic investigations (e.g., Sirdifield et al., 2020).

Thus, this paper provides a rapid review of the literature on factors associated with probation revocations. The goals of this review are to inform stakeholders about how probation revocation has been studied, highlight the most consistent research findings, and provide new insights about how to build on existing knowledge to further improve probation outcomes.

## Methods

The rapid review is a common method in the healthcare field; its main purpose is to review a particular body of literature in a reduced timeframe when compared with a systematic review method (Ganann et al., 2010). Previous research on the rapid review method has found that while systematic reviews delivered more detailed information, the central conclusions of rapid reviews were largely consistent with those resulting from systematic reviews (Watt et al., 2008). Thus, this approach allows practitioners and policy makers to make informed decisions about factors related to probation revocations in a context where time and resources are limited. Given the current sociopolitical climate (e.g., concerns over racial disparities in criminal legal processing) and calls for criminal legal reform, information on probation revocations is urgently needed.

For the current review, three reviewers independently searched for peer-reviewed journal articles. Articles were selected for full review if they related to the influence of probation officers, caseload size, supervision intensity, legal financial obligations, probation client characteristics, or programming and services on probation revocations. Search engines included Google Scholar, ProQuest Sociological abstracts, EBSCO Criminal Justice Abstracts, EBSCO Academic Search, ProQuest Social Sciences, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Library, and Indiana University-Bloomington Library. The reviewers also relied on reference lists in articles to identify other works of interest. Search terms used included “probation” and “revocation” or “recidivism”; in addition to one of the following terms: “officer probationer relationship,” “probationer demographics,”

“programming,” “caseload size,” “intensive supervision program,” “monetary sanctions,” “criminal justice debt,” “legal financial obligations,” “fines and fees,” “probationer characteristics,” “age,” “gender,” “race,” “education,” “employment,” “programs,” “drug treatment,” or “cognitive behavioral therapy.”

The reviewers conducted a full-text review of an estimated 68 articles; a total of 50 articles were selected for final inclusion and are detailed in [Table 1](#). Articles were excluded if they were published prior to 1990, published in a language other than English, focused on juvenile rather than adult probation clients, or if the topic focused on parole or another form of community corrections (e.g., home detention) rather than probation. Additionally, for articles related to programming and services, articles were excluded when program outcomes were not reported. Qualitative and quantitative studies were both included. After each article was reviewed, one reviewer independently assessed each section of the review, noting what she believed to be the most relevant findings and gaps in the research. The other two reviewers then examined these findings and noted any suggested additions or revisions, which were resolved in collaboration.

## Results

### *Effects of probation officer behaviors and officer-client relationships on revocations*

Probation officers’ supervision strategies have often been considered secondary to the specific probation programming their clients are regularly ordered to complete (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy). Therefore, relatively few studies have focused on the effect officers have on probation outcomes. However, studies that do exist suggest probation officers may have more substantial impacts on client outcomes than initially thought.

Some research suggests that PO behavior influences probation outcomes. For example, a 2007 study examined the effects of decisions by the courtroom workgroup members (i.e., judges, prosecutors, and probation officers) on probation violations, revocations, and incarcerations. Using data on 2,840 Arizona probation clients, researchers found that, in the courtroom workgroup, probation officers had the largest impact on probation revocation cases (Rodriguez & Webb, 2007). Given that the most common cause of revocation is technical violations and not new arrests, power lies with probation officers who have the ultimate responsibility of deciding whether to address a client’s behavior with an informal reprimand or a formal violation.

Another more recent study examined one type of probation officer behavior that may impact client behavior: the use of rewards and sanctions. Using administrative data on 283 participants from the Wyoming Department of Corrections, analyses found that the utilization of both rewards and sanctions increased successful program outcomes for probation clients and decreased revocation rates. The effect was particularly strong when rewards and sanctions were applied with a 4 (or more) rewards to 1 sanction ratio (Wodahl et al., 2011).

However, other research suggests PO behavior may not influence probation outcomes. A study on officers’ responses to client activities suggested that PO behavior had no significant effect on either client criminal or violation behaviors (MacKenzie et al., 1999). Another more recent study examined the impact of PO actions on recidivism of female clients and found that, although anxiety caused by punitive officer-client relationships may

**Table 1.** Literature on factors associated with adult probation revocations.

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
<b>Probation Officer Behaviors &amp; Officer-Client Relationships</b>			
MacKenzie et al., 1999	126 clients from three Virginia probation departments	Regression analyses & Linear Structural Relationships analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was no evidence that responses by officers within a month of a violation have any impact on probation outcomes in terms of crime or violation behaviors.</li> </ul>
Morash et al., 2016	226 female clients and 73 officers from Michigan probation departments	Path analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer actions measured had no measurable effect on probationer recidivism.</li> <li>• Probationer anxiety caused by punitive officer-client relationships may have had negative effects on probationer recidivism.</li> </ul>
Morash et al., 2014	330 female clients from Michigan probation and parole departments	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Probation and parole clients with officers who utilized supportive (rather than punitive) behaviors had less anxiety and less tendency toward reactive behaviors.</li> <li>• Punitive supervision style was most related to reactance and anxiety for female clients at lowest risk for recidivism, while supportiveness was most related to positive outcomes for highest risk female clients.</li> </ul>
Okonofua et al., 2021	216 officers from California probation and parole departments	Akaike information criterion (AIC) model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compared to the control group, probation and parole clients receiving “empathetic supervision” experienced a 13% reduction in violations and recidivism.</li> <li>• Training effects on officer “collective blame” remained for as long as ten months post-training.</li> </ul>
Rodriguez & Webb, 2007	2,840 clients from Arizona probation departments	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within the courtroom workgroup, probation officers had the largest impact on probation revocation cases.</li> </ul>
Skeem et al., 2003	32 officers and 20 clients from several major cities’ probation departments	Qualitative analysis of focus group data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialty probation agencies emphasized offender rehabilitation, while traditional probation agencies emphasized community safety.</li> <li>• Clients experienced better mental health treatment outcomes when supervised by specialty probation agencies rather than traditional agencies.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Smith et al., 2020	69 Michigan probation and parole officers and 353 probation and parole clients of these officers	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients supervised by officers with procedurally fair approaches were more likely to be rearrested within 24 months of beginning probation.</li> <li>• Clients supervised by officers with authoritarian approaches were less likely to be rearrested within 24 months of beginning probation.</li> </ul>
Sturm et al., 2021	199 clients from Netherlands probation departments	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients who reported greater trust in their probation officers were less likely to recidivate within a four-year follow up period.</li> </ul>
Wodahl et al., 2011	283 clients from Wyoming probation departments	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilization of both rewards and sanctions increased successful program outcomes for clients and decreased revocation rates.</li> <li>• Most effective ratio for applying rewards and sanctions was 4:1.</li> </ul>
<b>Supervision Intensity &amp; Specialized Caseloads</b>			
Barnes et al., 2010	1,559 low-risk probation and parole cases that began between 2002 and 2004	Randomized controlled trial & random forests model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were not significant differences in arrests in the follow-up period between the cases receiving standard intensity supervision and those receiving low-intensity supervision.</li> </ul>
Buttars et al., 2016	885 sex offenders from a Midwestern state department of corrections	Analysis of covariance, survival analysis & logistic regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive supervision community corrections clients were more likely to be revoked from placement than clients receiving standard community corrections supervision.</li> <li>• No differences in recidivism or severity of recidivated offenses were found between groups.</li> </ul>
Duru et al., 2020	2,999 low-risk clients from one of the largest probation departments in the U.S.	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients on the low-risk caseloads were significantly less likely to be revoked than clients on high-risk, intensive supervision caseloads.</li> <li>• Rates of rearrest were similar across both groups, suggesting that the reduced supervision intensity did not negatively influence criminal behavior.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Fox et al., 2022	Review of five studies on impact of probation caseload sizes on client outcomes	Rapid evidence assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studies reviewed suggested smaller caseload sizes do not result in more intensive supervision or more probation violations.</li> </ul>
Frailing et al., 2020	Program evaluation of the Swift and Certain (SAC) Probation Program in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana	Program evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of the SAC program's goals were being met, including measurable reductions in new crime, substance use, and jail overcrowding.</li> </ul>
Hyatt & Barnes, 2017	832 clients from a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania probation department	Randomized controlled trial & program evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No differences in recidivism were found between probation clients who received ISP and those who received traditional supervision.</li> <li>• ISP clients had significantly more violations, incarcerations, and abscondments.</li> </ul>
Jalbert et al., 2010	8,878 clients from an Iowa department of corrections	Regression discontinuity design & survival analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISP reduced the likelihood of recidivism by 25.5% in the first six months after release.</li> <li>• Effects lasted beyond 18 months for some types of arrest (property and violent).</li> <li>• ISP had no significant effect on revocations for non-arrest related violations (e.g., positive drug screens).</li> </ul>
Jalbert et al., 2011	39,295 cases from probation departments in Oklahoma, Iowa, and Colorado	Randomized controlled trial, difference in differences design, focus groups, & interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients on smaller caseloads had fewer arrests for new crimes and were more likely to receive correctional interventions.</li> <li>• Technical violations were slightly higher for clients on smaller caseloads compared to clients on larger caseloads.</li> <li>• Positive effects were only found in cases where evidence-based practices were utilized by officers.</li> </ul>
Manchak et al., 2014	359 cases from two undisclosed probation agencies in the U.S.	Longitudinal multimethod multi-measure matched design & regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller, specialty caseloads yielded significantly more effective officer practices (problem solving vs. sanction threats), greater treatment engagement, and fewer rates of violation reports than traditional caseloads.</li> </ul>
Taxman, 2002	Review of 15 studies on ISPs from 1960 to 1998	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studies reviewed suggested ISPs elicit either no difference in recidivism or higher incidence of recidivism compared to traditional probation.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Van Deirse et al., 2022	100 clients with serious mental illness from probation departments in two southeastern U.S. counties	Randomized controlled trial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients on specialty mental health probation caseloads had higher rates of mental health treatment engagement, as well as higher rates of new crime violations.</li> </ul>
<b>Monetary Sanctions</b>			
Brett et al., 2020	Review of statutes and policies in all 50 U.S. states & Interviews with over 100 justice system stakeholders (e.g., defense attorneys, probation officers, judges)	Policy analyses & qualitative analyses of interviews with criminal justice stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutes in 8 states allow revocation due to nonpayment without referencing ability to pay &amp; those in 23 states outline ability to pay requirements.</li> <li>• Statutes in 3 states prohibit revocation due to nonpayment alone.</li> <li>• Remaining states do not have statutes on revocation for nonpayment, but several allow revocation for violation of any probation condition (such as nonpayment).</li> <li>• Revocations based on nonpayment alone are rare, but probation officers may accumulate violations including nonpayment which increase revocation odds.</li> </ul>
Cadigan & Kirk, 2020	126 interviews of Illinois and Washington State residents sentenced to pay monetary sanctions & Courtroom observations totaling 300 hours	Qualitative analyses of interviews & ethnographic observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court processes associated with LFO collection complicate maintenance of employment and housing which in turn complicates compliance with probation requirements.</li> </ul>
Gordon & Glaser, 1991	824 cases sentenced to probation in Los Angeles County municipal courts between 1981 and 1984	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients assigned probation, jail, and financial penalty had higher odds of revocation compared to those who were only assigned financial penalties.</li> <li>• Greater financial penalties appeared to be linked with revocation.</li> </ul>
Harris, 2016	Observations of 85 sentencing hearings & 50 violation hearings; Interviews with 102 court stakeholders (e.g., judges, attorneys)	Policy analyses, qualitative analyses of court observations, & interviews of court officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44 U.S. states and Washington D.C. have statutes allowing imprisonment for nonpayment.</li> <li>• Court officials in different jurisdictions had varied interpretations of legal concepts (e.g., willfulness).</li> </ul>
Iratzoqui & Metcalfe, 2017	358 indigent adult felony cases in a Florida public defender's office	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monetary sanctions were not significantly associated with probation violations, though effects were in the expected direction.</li> </ul>
Minor et al., 2003	200 federal probation clients supervised in Kentucky, 1996–1999	Chi-square tests & Regression analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was not a significant association between fines, restitution, and violations.</li> </ul>

(Continued)



**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Ruhland et al., 2020	1,257 clients from one Texas probation department	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compared to fines, fees had a larger influence on revocations.</li> <li>• Clients with larger fee assessment amounts, but not fine assessment amounts, had a significantly greater likelihood of revocation.</li> <li>• Clients with a greater percentage of unpaid fines and fees were more likely to be revoked.</li> </ul>
Shannon, 2020	11 probation officers and 60 clients from three judicial circuits in Georgia	Qualitative analysis of interview data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Probation officers reported clients were never revoked due solely to nonpayment but could be revoked due to nonpayment in combination with other kinds of noncompliance.</li> <li>• Clients reported threats by officers and fear of incarceration for nonpayment.</li> </ul>
<b>Client Characteristics</b>			
Albonetti & Hepburn, 1997	617 clients in Phoenix, Arizona	Survival analysis & Cox regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Among the most disadvantaged group of clients – those with less than a high school education who also had a prior arrest record – men and younger clients were significantly more likely to be revoked.</li> <li>• For clients with higher levels of education and/or no arrest record, age and sex did not significantly predict revocation.</li> </ul>
Dagenhardt, 2021	347 cases in domestic violence courts in one urban Midwestern county in 2016 & 100 cases selected for qualitative analysis	Regression analyses & Critical discourse analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likelihood of noncompliance sanctioning did not vary by race or ethnicity.</li> <li>• Hispanic and Black clients had shorter jail stays for noncompliance.</li> <li>• Judges tended to sanction Black and Hispanic clients for minor drug use violations with a short jail stay but White clients tended to be punished with longer jail stays only when they committed more serious violations.</li> </ul>
Gordon & Glaser, 1991	824 probation cases sentenced in Los Angeles municipal courts in from 1981–1984	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black and younger clients were more likely to be revoked.</li> <li>• Revocation odds for Hispanic clients were not significantly different from those of White clients.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Gray et al., 2001	1,574 clients committed to probation in Michigan in 1996	Survival analysis & Cox regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex was not significantly associated with technical violations or new crimes.</li> <li>• Nonwhite clients were more likely to commit technical violations but were no more likely to commit new crimes.</li> </ul>
Jannetta et al., 2014	105,200 clients from four probation departments in Texas, Iowa, Oregon, and New York and 50 probation staff and judges	Regression analyses & qualitative analysis of interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age was not significantly associated with success, but the relationship was in the anticipated direction.</li> <li>• Black clients were more likely revoked compared to White and Hispanic clients across all sites.</li> <li>• Compared to White clients, in one location, Hispanic clients had higher rates of revocation, in two other locations the rate was lower, and in one final location there was no discernable difference.</li> <li>• Probation staff and judges suggested racial minorities were more likely have justice system contact and revocations due to increased police presence in minority neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
Morgan, 1994	266 Tennessee felony clients with cases that ended from 1980–1989	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male clients and those with lower education levels were more likely to be unsuccessful.</li> <li>• Race and age were not significantly associated with probation outcomes, but the associations were in the expected direction.</li> </ul>
Olson & Lurigio, 2000	2,400 Illinois clients that were discharged in 1997	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex was not significantly associated with revocation.</li> <li>• Younger clients were more likely to be revoked.</li> </ul>
Ruhland et al., 2020	1,257 clients from one Texas probation department	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men were more likely than women to be revoked for new offenses but not for technical violations.</li> <li>• Age, race, and ethnicity were not significantly associated with revocation.</li> <li>• White compared to non-white clients experienced revocation more quickly.</li> </ul>
Sims & Jones, 1997	2,850 felony clients that exited probation in North Carolina in 1993	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger, African American, and male clients were significantly more likely to experience probation failure.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Steinmetz & Henderson, 2016	115,384 clients that exited probation between 2000–2010 in two of the largest counties in a large southwestern state	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients who were Black, Hispanic, and male were more likely to be revoked.</li> <li>• The interaction of being Black and male was a strong predictor of revocation.</li> <li>• Age was a poor predictor for revocation.</li> </ul>
Tapia & Harris, 2006	1,514 felony clients in a large southern state who started probation in 1993	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For male, female, White, and Hispanic clients, unemployment was associated with higher odds of revocation.</li> <li>• Unemployed Black clients did not have a significantly higher likelihood of revocation compared to employed Black clients.</li> <li>• Black men aged 17–29 had the greatest chances of revocation regardless of employment.</li> <li>• Revocation odds for Hispanic clients were similar to those of White clients.</li> </ul>
Turner et al., 2022	6,600 misdemeanor cases from one county in Georgia in which clients began probation between 2016–2018	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger and male clients were more likely to be unsuccessful.</li> <li>• Hispanic clients were more likely to be successful compared to White clients.</li> </ul>
Zettler & Martin, 2020	123 clients who were felony drug court participants between 2015 and 2017 in a southwestern urban county	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients with higher levels of education had reduced odds of revocation.</li> </ul>
<b>Programming and Services</b>			
Barnes et al., 2017	904 high-risk probation and parole clients assigned to a standard intensive supervision or a CBT treatment condition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Randomized field trial & Intention-to-treat analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients who received CBT treatment had a significantly reduced likelihood of being charged for a new crime in the one-year follow-up period.</li> </ul>
Golden, 2002	142 clients from a Texas probation department	Quasi-experimental design & regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New criminal offense rates for probation clients who completed Thinking for a Change were 33% lower than that for comparison groups.</li> <li>• There were no differences in technical violation filings between Thinking for a Change completers and comparison groups.</li> <li>• Being a Thinking for a Change dropout, being classified as “high risk” on risk assessments, and having poor problem-solving skills were all predictors of technical violations.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Goodson et al., 2020	200 female clients from several Michigan probation departments	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer support was positively related to violations and arrests when a client's treatment engagement was low, contraindicating group treatment for some individuals.</li> </ul>
Hatcher et al., 2012	Experimental group: 173 male clients sentenced to probation in 2002 in England and Wales who were referred to a cognitive skills program. Comparison group: 173 male clients matched one-to-one based on criminogenic variables	Quasi-experimental design, intention to treat & treatment received analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intention to treat analysis revealed no difference in reconviction across different groups.</li> <li>Treatment received analysis showed moderate completion effects. For every three clients that completed the program, five clients in the matched comparison group were reconvicted.</li> <li>Treatment received analysis also showed a noncompletion effect in that clients who did not complete the program were two times more likely to be reconvicted compared to the matched comparison group.</li> </ul>
Hollin et al., 2008	4,935 male clients sentenced to probation in 2002 in England and Wales who: (1) completed a structured cognitive-behavioral treatment program, (2) began but did not complete a program, (3) were assigned to a program but failed to start the program, or (4) had not been assigned to a program	Quasi-experimental design & regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients that completed a program showed reduced reconviction rates relative to all other groups.</li> </ul>
Jacobs et al., 2022	772 clients with either mental health, substance use, or co-occurring disorders from a San Francisco probation department	Cox proportional hazards models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of mental health services significantly predicted decreased recidivism for individuals diagnosed with a mental disorder.</li> <li>There was no significant relationship between services and recidivism for those with substance use and co-occurring disorders.</li> </ul>
Jalbert et al., 2011	39,295 cases from probation departments in Oklahoma, Iowa, and Colorado	Randomized controlled trial (OK) or a regression discontinuity design (IA & CO), & survival analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients on smaller caseloads had fewer arrests for new crimes and were more likely to receive correctional interventions.</li> <li>Technical violations were slightly higher for clients on smaller caseloads compared to clients on larger caseloads.</li> <li>Positive effects were only found in cases where evidence-based practices were utilized by officers.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.** (Continued).

	Sample size/population	Method	Findings
Kosson et al., 2019	287 clients from an Illinois probation department	Survival analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treatment group clients (those who attended <i>Thinking for a Change</i>) were more likely to complete probation successfully and survive longer before rearrest.</li> <li>• Treatment was predictive of lower recidivism among certain ethnicities, including European Americans and African Americans, but not Latino Americans.</li> </ul>
Longshore et al., 2004	35,947 cases from California probation departments	Program evaluation & regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only one in five clients who participated in treatment under Proposition 36 were revoked from probation, a rate lower than traditional probation.</li> </ul>
Lowenkamp et al., 2009	217 felony clients in Tippecanoe County, Indiana. 121 clients were referred to a CBT program, 96 clients were not referred to the program.	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recidivism rates were significantly reduced for clients who participated in the program compared to those who had not participated.</li> </ul>
McGuire et al., 2008	929 male clients sentenced in 2002 in England and Wales who: (1) completed a structured cognitive-behavioral treatment program, (2) began but did not complete a program, (3) were assigned to a program but failed to start the program, or (4) had not been assigned to a program	Intention-to-treat analysis & treatment received analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When comparing groups that were or were not assigned to a program, there was no significant overall difference between groups in terms of re-conviction outcomes.</li> <li>• Program completion was associated with reduced re-convictions.</li> <li>• Results indicated a potential treatment effect among moderate to high-risk clients.</li> </ul>
Palmer et al., 2015	801 female clients in England and Wales who: (1) completed a cognitive skills program, (2) began but did not complete a program, or (3) were not assigned to a program	Quasi-experimental design & regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recidivism rates were not significantly different between (1) those who completed the program and those who were not assigned to a program, or (2) those who completed and those who did not complete.</li> <li>• Clients who did not complete the program had higher reconviction rates compared to those who were not assigned to a program.</li> </ul>
Rodriguez & Webb, 2007	2,840 clients from Arizona probation departments	Regression analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within the courtroom workgroup, probation officers had the largest impact on probation revocation cases.</li> </ul>

Note: Study descriptions do not necessarily include all methods, data sources, and/or findings. Instead, the study description is focused on elements relevant to the influence of each factor (e.g., probation officer behavior, monetary sanctions) on probation revocation, success, and/or recidivism. The term “clients” refers to probation clients unless otherwise specified.

have had negative effects, specific PO actions measured had none (Morash et al., 2016). More research is needed to clarify both whether PO decision-making is driving revocation rates as well as what influences decision-making in situations of client noncompliance (i.e., whether to reprimand informally or formally).

A handful of studies have also examined the nature and impact of the PO-client relationship on violations. Seminal work by Andrews and Bonta (2015) on the Risk Needs Responsivity model (RNR) emphasizes the importance of high-quality interpersonal relationships to reduce criminogenic needs.

Research has indicated that PO-client relationships characterized by respect, supportiveness, empathy, and trust appear to be associated with improved outcomes. For instance, one study utilized focus groups and administrative data to compare outcomes for clients with mental health treatment mandates, who were either assigned to traditional probation agencies or to specialty agencies (Skeem et al., 2003). The study found that clients had better treatment outcomes when supervised by specialty agencies, which emphasized rehabilitation (rather than only community safety) and utilized a respectful, personal relationship with clients.

A later longitudinal study explored the impact of the relationship between female probation and parole clients and their officers regarding how clients respond to supervision actions (Morash et al., 2014). The study utilized interview data from 330 female clients in Michigan and found that clients with POs who utilized supportive (rather than punitive) behaviors had less anxiety and less tendency toward reactive behaviors (i.e., doing the opposite of what the PO asks of her).

In a similar vein, researchers in California examined the effects of “empathetic supervision” on probation and parole violations (Okonofua et al., 2021). A total of 216 probation and parole officers were given empathetic supervision exercises geared toward increasing empathy and reducing “collective blame” toward clients. Compared to the control group, clients receiving “empathetic supervision” experienced a 13% reduction in violations and recidivism.

Another study in that year examined the effects of the PO-client relationship through the lens of the Working Alliance with Mandated Clients Inventory (WAMCI), developed from modern psychotherapy research which explores the “working alliance” between therapists and patients (Sturm et al., 2021). Using a sample of 199 individuals sentenced to community supervision in the Netherlands, researchers used the WAMCI tool to measure the officer-client relationship on subscales such as “Trust” and “Reactance,” and found that clients that reported greater trust in their POs were less likely to recidivate within the four-year follow up period.

In contrast to studies which have found that PO-client relationships characterized by elements like trust and empathy are associated with improved outcomes, a recent study has found that authoritative supervision styles may be more effective than those that are procedurally just. Smith et al. (2020) examined the relationship between PO supervision styles and female probation and parole client outcomes. Using interviews and surveys, researchers captured perceptions about officers’ background, caseload characteristics, and supervision styles, such as “procedurally fair” or “authoritative.” Data suggested that female clients whose POs used procedurally fair supervision styles were more likely to be rearrested, while those with more authoritative supervision styles were less likely to be rearrested.

In summary, research on the impacts of PO behaviors and the PO-client relationship suggests that these dynamics may have important implications for probation outcomes. While some research has found little to no evidence that PO actions influence client behavior or success, other studies have found that POs' decisions are consequential in impacting case outcomes and that POs use of sanctions and rewards have the potential to reduce revocation rates. Research on the PO-client relationship generally suggests that relationships characterized by respect, supportiveness, empathy, and trust have a positive impact on supervision outcomes.

### ***Effects of supervision intensity and specialized caseloads on probation revocations***

Intensive supervision programs (ISPs) are often integrated into probation departments. ISP clients are monitored more closely (e.g., more frequent reporting), and their release conditions are more stringent (e.g., more programming) than those for clients on a traditional caseload. The rationale behind ISPs assumes that clients who are more closely supervised will have less misconduct and better outcomes. However, a majority of studies have found ISPs to have worse client outcomes than traditional probation. A 2002 review of 15 studies on ISPs from 1960 to 1998 found that ISPs elicited either no difference in recidivism or higher incidence of recidivism compared to traditional probation (Taxman, 2002).

Findings from several more recent studies are consistent with Taxman's 2002 review in that they have found either no difference or higher rates of revocation and incarceration for ISP clients. For example, a 2010 study utilized administrative data collected on 8,878 probation clients from the Iowa Department of Correction from 2001 to 2007 to examine ISP outcomes. Data suggests that ISP reduced the likelihood of recidivism (i.e., new arrests during or after the probation period) by 25.5% in the first six months after release. However, researchers emphasized that ISP had no significant effect on revocations for non-arrest related violations (e.g., positive drug screens; Jalbert et al., 2010).

In a 2016 study, Buttars, Huss, and Brack found that ISP probation clients were more likely to be revoked than individuals receiving standard probation. After controlling for propensity score, residential treatment and standard probation were the only significant predictors of revocation (Buttars et al., 2016). Another study by Hyatt and Barnes (2017) details an experimental evaluation of an ISP and its effects on probation client recidivism, absconding, technical violations, and incarceration. Clients were randomly assigned to either ISP (N = 447) or a traditional caseload (N = 385). After 12 months, no differences in recidivism were found; ISP clients had significantly more technical violations and incarcerations; they also absconded at significantly higher rates. The authors posit that these high failure rates may signal that the enhanced requirements of ISPs are simply too much for some high-risk clients to endure.

A recent study by Frailing et al. (2020) contrasts the findings of negative ISP outcomes from other research. The study examines the Swift and Certain (SAC) Probation Program in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, an intensive supervision program for high-risk clients. In the study's first two years, researchers found that the majority of the program's goals were being met, including measurable reductions in new crime, substance use, and jail overcrowding. However, researchers indicated that SAC programs present their own set of challenges and advocate exploring these, particularly through the use of probation client perceptions surveys.

As opposed to ISPs, a study by Duru et al. (2020) explored how reducing, rather than enhancing, supervision intensity impacts low-risk probation clients. A total of 2,999 low-risk clients in a large U.S. probation department were assigned to either a low-risk or a regular caseload (i.e., mixed low, moderate, and high-risk clients). A low-risk caseload reduced supervision intensity in terms of face-to-face contacts, urine drug screens, and overall volume of case notes. Researchers found that clients on the low-risk caseload were significantly less likely to be revoked. Further, rates of rearrest were similar across both groups, indicating that the reduced supervision intensity did not negatively influence criminal behavior. Duru et al.'s findings are consistent with an earlier randomized controlled trial which utilized a sample of 1,559 low-risk probation and parole clients (Barnes et al., 2010). Clients were assigned either to a standard intensity or a low-intensity supervision group and the study found no significant differences in arrests between the groups during a one year follow up period.

Another line of research suggests that smaller probation caseloads may promote positive client outcomes. For example, a multi-site study in 2011 found that clients on smaller caseloads had fewer arrests for new crimes and were more likely to receive correctional interventions; however, technical violations were slightly higher than those on larger caseloads (Jalbert et al., 2011). The authors emphasized that these positive effects were only seen in agencies whose officers had correctly implemented evidence-based practices in their casework.

A later, longitudinal study by Manchak et al. (2014) examined differences between smaller, specialty caseloads in terms of officer practices, probation client treatment, and rule violations. Specialty mental health caseloads (n = 183 clients) were compared to larger, traditional caseloads (n = 176 clients). Results suggested that smaller, specialty caseloads yielded significantly more effective officer practices (problem solving vs. sanction threats), greater treatment involvement, and fewer rates of violation reports than traditional caseloads.

Recently, Fox et al. (2022) conducted a Rapid Evidence Assessment on studies examining the impact of probation caseload sizes on client outcomes. A total of five relevant studies were identified for this review. Although researchers anticipated that small caseload sizes would result in more intensive supervision and therefore more probation violations, the studies reviewed did not find this effect; instead, the studies found that smaller caseload sizes had lower rates of technical violations as well as new arrests and reconvictions.

A randomized control trial in 2022 examined the effects of a specialty mental health probation (SMHP) caseload on probation client outcomes in two southeastern U.S. counties (Van Deirse et al., 2022). For a total of 100 clients with serious mental illnesses on either a standard or SMHP caseload, researchers examined outcomes in terms of mental health treatment engagement and crime violations. Results suggest that clients on SMHP had higher rates of mental health treatment engagement but also had higher rates of new crime violations.

Overall, ISPs are largely unsuccessful and unlikely to reduce revocations due to enhanced detection of problematic behavior. On the other hand, reduced supervision intensity for low-risk clients may successfully reduce revocations without having a negative impact on criminal behavior. Further, smaller caseload sizes may improve supervision outcomes in terms of violations, new arrests, and reconvictions.



### ***Effects of monetary sanctions on probation revocations***

Probation revocations can also stem from nonpayment of monetary sanctions, which are also frequently referred to as “legal financial obligations,” and may include court costs, fines, fees, restitution, and surcharges (Harris, 2016; Vallas & Patel, 2012). Monthly user fees are often assessed for individuals on probation but monetary sanctions that are accumulated at other points of criminal justice contact (e.g., court costs, cost of treatment) inflate criminal debt and can have far reaching effects (Harris, 2016).

In 1971, the Supreme Court held that imposing a jail sentence due to an indigent individual’s unpaid fines is unconstitutional (*Tate v. Short*, 1972). Additionally, in 1983 the Supreme Court ruled in *Bearden v. Georgia* that an individual cannot be revoked from probation if the court has not evaluated the individual’s ability to pay and has not weighed alternative options to incarceration (*Bearden v. Georgia*, 1983). The ruling specified that an individual cannot be imprisoned for failure to pay unless the individual possesses the resources to make payments but willfully refuses to do so. Notwithstanding such legal protections, there is evidence that policies and practices regarding nonpayment of monetary sanctions in many jurisdictions still leads to revocations (Bannon et al., 2010).

Some research based on policy and qualitative analyses has documented policies and practices which influence revocations. For instance, Alexes Harris (2016) provided a detailed illustration of how legal financial obligations (LFOs) are implemented in the U.S. Harris found that relatively recent modifications in state penal codes, adding and modifying existing LFOs, have contributed to a dramatic increase in the both the regularity with which they are imposed as well as the total amount imposed in recent years. Harris found that a total of 44 states as well as the District of Columbia have statutes which permit judges to impose imprisonment for nonpayment of LFOs. In evaluating the LFO practices in five Washington State counties, Harris found an explanation for how nonpayment may still lead to probation revocations, despite the legal protections previously mentioned. By observing court proceedings and interviewing court officials and defendants, Harris discovered that court officials conceived of their own varied interpretations of legal concepts like “willfulness” and “indigent.” For instance, individuals who were homeless were still expected to pay LFOs in some counties.

The Harvard Law School Criminal Justice Policy Program also recently published a report on financial sanctions for individuals on probation which relied on a review of state statutes and local policies as well as interviews with various stakeholders such as probation officers and judges (Brett et al., 2020). The report assessed state statutes relevant to revocation for nonpayment of LFOs and found wide variation. Statutes in eight states allow revocation or incarceration due to delinquent fines, fees, and/or restitution and these statutes do not reference the individual’s ability to pay. However, in twenty-three states, there are statutes which outline the requirements of assessing ability to pay under *Bearden*. Just three states have statutes which prohibit revocation or incarceration due to nonpayment alone. While the other fifteen states do not have statutes on the topic of revoking probation for nonpayment, a number of them do have statutes allowing revocation based on violation of any condition of probation which could include a nonpayment violation. Attorneys reported that nonpayment increases the odds of revocation (Brett et al., 2020). The authors also found that while revocations based on nonpayment alone are rare, probation officers may accumulate violations including nonpayment, to make a stronger

case when filing for revocation. Importantly, interviews indicated that when nonpayment violations are included among other violations, ability to pay is not often assessed.

While such practices have been documented, empirical research on the influence of monetary sanctions on adult probation revocations is limited. In 1991, Gordon and Glaser evaluated the use and effects of financial penalties in the Los Angeles County municipal courts. The authors found that individuals who were assigned probation, jail, and financial penalty had higher odds of revocation compared to those who were only assigned financial penalties. Also, the extent of the financial penalty reduced the odds that the amount would be paid in full but increased the chances of probation being revoked. Thus, greater financial penalties appeared to be linked with revocation.

On the other hand, some scholars have found that only certain types of monetary sanctions result in negative probation outcomes. Ruhland et al. (2020) investigated the association between fines and fees and probation revocation. The authors conducted regression analyses on a sample of 1,257 clients from one probation department in Texas. Results indicated that, compared to fines (used for punitive purposes), fees (used to pay for services) had a larger influence on revocations. Clients with larger fee assessment amounts, but not fine assessment amounts, had a significantly greater likelihood of revocation. Aside from what clients were charged, the study also found that those with a greater percentage of unpaid fines and fees were more likely to be revoked (Ruhland et al., 2020).

Other empirical research has failed to find a significant association between monetary sanctions and probation outcomes. Minor et al. (2003) examined two types of LFO's, fines and restitution, and did not find a significant impact on violations in a sample of 200 individuals, on federal probation in Kentucky, from 1996 to 1999. This study's analysis was limited to fines and restitution, ignoring fees, which Ruhland et al. (2020) recently found to have a larger influence on probation revocations compared to fines. Iratzoqui and Metcalfe (2017) assessed the relationship between several monetary sanctions and probation violations in a sample of 358 indigent adults with felony probation cases in a public defender's office in Florida. The study found that monetary sanctions did not significantly influence the chances of probation violation but did produce effects in the anticipated direction.

Qualitative research has also indicated that while POs report that revocations based solely on nonpayment are rare, probation clients often express fear of such revocation which may indirectly lead to incarceration. Probation officers (n = 11) from three judicial circuits in Georgia reported that clients were never revoked only due to nonpayment (Shannon, 2020). Instead, they suggested that clients could be revoked based on nonpayment in addition to other kinds of noncompliance. However, many clients (n = 60) supervised in the same judicial districts reported that they were threatened by POs and were fearful of incarceration based on nonpayment. One PO explained that in some cases, clients would fail to appear for probation meetings because they are fearful of revocation solely based on nonpayment. In these cases, a client could be revoked for the technical violation of failure to appear which was rooted in nonpayment.

Taken together, empirical research generally finds that monetary sanctions increase rates of probation failure, particularly when the rates are higher and even more so when individuals cannot pay them and receive violations. Explaining why this is the case, a 2020 study found that court processes related to LFO collection (e.g., court appearances)

destabilize individuals' lives, making it more difficult to maintain stable employment or housing and therefore more difficult to remain compliant with probation requirements (Cadigan & Kirk, 2020). Therefore, LFOs influence probation failure indirectly through financial hardship and procedural hassle.

### ***Effects of probation client characteristics on probation revocations***

#### ***Sex***

Several studies examine the effects of probation client demographics or characteristics on revocations. In terms of sex, literature on probation outcomes is mixed. Some studies find that male clients are more likely to be revoked (Steinmetz & Henderson, 2016) and/or to be unsuccessful on probation (Morgan, 1994; Sims & Jones, 1997; Turner et al., 2022). Other research has not found a significant relationship between sex and probation revocations, technical violations, or new crimes (Gray et al., 2001; Olson & Lurigio, 2000). There is some evidence to suggest that the influence of sex and age on probation success is explained by probation clients' prior records and lower education levels (Albonetti & Hepburn, 1997). There is also evidence to suggest that men are more likely than women to be revoked for new offenses, but not for technical violations (Ruhland et al., 2020).

#### ***Age***

Several studies have found that younger probation clients had a greater likelihood of revocation (Gordon & Glaser, 1991; Olson & Lurigio, 2000) or were more likely to be unsuccessful on probation (Sims & Jones, 1997; Turner et al., 2022). Other research has found a weaker relationship between age and probation outcomes. Steinmetz and Henderson (2016) found that age was a poor predictor for probation revocation. The authors suggest this finding could be explained by the mean age of the sample, which was around 34 years old. Ruhland et al. (2020) also found that age did not significantly relate to the revocation odds. Morgan (1994) found that while age did not significantly predict probation success, the relationship was in the predicted direction.

#### ***Race & ethnicity***

Compared to sex and age, the literature finds a stronger relationship between race and probation outcomes. Gordon and Glaser (1991) found that Black probation clients had more than twice the odds of being revoked. This relationship between race and revocation mirrors findings in the more general context of race and probation success (Gray et al., 2001; Sims & Jones, 1997; Turner et al., 2022; Whitehead, 2006).

In a 2014 study, the Urban Institute investigated whether race affected revocations by examining 105,200 probation clients from four probation departments in Texas, Iowa, Oregon, and New York (Jannetta et al., 2014). The study found that Black clients were significantly more likely to be revoked when compared to Hispanic and White clients. To give context to these findings, 50 probation staff and judges across the four sites were also interviewed. Many respondents expressed the view that racial and ethnic minorities had greater likelihoods of arrest and that minority neighborhoods were more heavily monitored by police resulting in more frequent contact. Consequently, respondents believed that minorities had a greater likelihood of arrest, probation violations, and revocations.

In one recent exception to the literature which has found a relationship between race and probation revocations, Ruhland et al. (2020) found no influence of race or ethnicity on the likelihood of probation revocations in one Texas probation department. Moreover, Ruhland et al. (2020) found that compared to nonwhite individuals, White individuals generally experienced revocation due to technical violations and new criminal offenses more quickly.

Recent research suggests that a mixed-methods approach may help explain discordant findings related to the influence of race and ethnicity on revocation and noncompliance. A mixed-methods study of 347 domestic violence cases from one urban county in the Midwestern U.S. found that there were not differences in the chances of being sanctioned for noncompliance between probation clients of different races and ethnicities (Dagenhardt, 2021). Further, and unexpectedly, relative to White clients, Hispanic and Black clients were given shorter stays in jail for noncompliance. The qualitative data however, indicated that these shorter jail sanctions could be explained by the tendency for judges to sanction Black and Hispanic clients for minor drug use violations with a short jail stay. White clients, by contrast, were given longer jail stays only when more serious violations occurred.

Research has also found that negative probation outcomes may be more severe when race interacts with other demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and employment status. For instance, Steinmetz and Henderson (2016) found that Black probation clients had increased odds of revocation but also that the interaction between being Black and male was a strong predictor of revocation.

Tapia and Harris (2006) similarly found evidence of harsher revocation consequences for young Black men on probation for felony-level offenses. Black probation clients who were unemployed did not have a significantly higher likelihood of revocation when compared to employed Black clients. However, for male, female, White, and Hispanic clients, being unemployed was associated with a higher likelihood of revocation. In other words, the value of employment was reduced for Black clients. Further, compared to all other groups, Black men between the ages of 17 and 29 had the greatest chances of revocation regardless of being employed. Thus, the effect of things outside their control (age and skin color) had a greater impact on probation success than things inside their control (employment status).

The literature comparing probation outcomes of Hispanic and White clients demonstrates a wide range of findings. Steinmetz and Henderson (2016) found that Hispanic clients on probation had a greater likelihood of being revoked in comparison to White clients. In contrast, other research has found that revocation odds for Hispanic clients were similar or not significantly different from those of White clients (Gordon & Glaser, 1991; Ruhland et al., 2020; Tapia & Harris, 2006). The Urban Institute's investigation of disparities in probation revocations in four states also found mixed results in terms of disparities between Hispanic and other probation clients (Jannetta et al., 2014). In New York City, Hispanic clients had higher rates of revocation compared to White clients; however, in two other locations the revocation rate was lower than that for White clients and in one location there was no discernable difference. The revocation rate for Hispanic clients was lower than the rate for Black clients in all study locations. A more recent study also found that Hispanic probation clients were more likely to be successful on probation compared to White clients (Turner et al., 2022).

## **Education**

The literature also examines the effects of education on probation outcomes, which suggests that probation clients with greater educational attainment have better outcomes. Three studies have found that those with greater levels of education had higher odds of probation success and reduced odds of revocation (Morgan, 1994; Turner et al., 2022; Zettler & Martin, 2020). Similarly, another study found that those who had not completed high school had higher revocation odds (Gordon & Glaser, 1991).

In sum, the literature suggests that Black probation clients and those with lower levels of education are more likely to experience negative probation outcomes. Male clients may also experience poorer outcomes than female clients. It is more difficult to summarize the experiences of Hispanic clients using a national lens because they experience a discordant range of outcomes across different settings. Additionally, some studies have found that it is the interaction of demographic factors, such as race, ethnicity and gender that matters more than one factor alone.

## **Effects of programming and services on probation revocations**

Research has explored whether certain types of probation programming or services can reduce revocations. Taken together, research on probation programming consistently shows that the most promising programs incorporate substance abuse treatment and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT); both seek to address underlying issues that lead to high numbers of technical violations – the leading cause of probation revocations (Gray et al., 2001; Jalbert et al., 2010).

Additionally, research indicates that probation programs yield better outcomes when utilizing a risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) framework under which programming is tailored to the individual needs of each offender (Bonta et al., 2011). Thus, high-risk offenders receive more intensive services than low-risk offenders. Further, the services provided aim to correct factors associated with criminogenic behaviors such as substance abuse, pro-criminal attitudes, and criminal association (Jalbert et al., 2011). RNR research cautions practitioners to avoid over programming, that is, when low-risk offenders receive more or higher-level services than necessary. Essentially, services should target those who are high-risk because they are thought to be the most responsive to treatment (Jalbert et al., 2011; Van Voorhis et al., 2013).

## **Substance abuse treatment**

In evaluating the impact of Arizona's mandatory drug treatment law, Rodriguez and Webb (2007) examined data from 2,840 men on probation for low-level drug offenses. The authors found that most clients (57%) faced revocation of their probation for technical violations. However, the authors suggest that high revocations rates might be due to inadequate programming. That is, because the state mandated all probation clients to receive treatment, practitioners likely did not carefully assess what level of treatment each client needed, resulting in under/over programming for many clients which could have resulted in increased revocations according to the RNR model (Longshore et al., 2004; Rodriguez & Webb, 2007).

Some also contend that involuntary programs yield unfavorable outcomes. The RNR paradigm maintains programming is most effective when individuals are ready to change (Bonta et al., 2011). Thus, when people on probation voluntarily participate in drug

treatment, they evidence more favorable results. For example, California's "Proposition 36" provides adults convicted of a nonviolent drug offense the option to be placed on probation and take part in drug treatment. Under the Proposition, those with one or two drug-related violations would only face alterations to their treatment plans, not revocation. A study by Longshore et al. (2004) examined 35,947 probation clients who participated in treatment under Proposition 36 and found that only one in five clients were revoked, a rate lower than typical revocation rates.

A more recent study evaluated the influence of both mental health and substance abuse services on recidivism among a sample of probation clients (N = 772) with either mental health, substance use, or co-occurring disorders (Jacobs et al., 2022). Using Cox proportional hazards models, the authors found that use of mental health services significantly predicted decreased recidivism (i.e., rearrests) among probation clients diagnosed with a mental disorder. The analyses however, revealed no significant relationship between services and recidivism for those with substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. In fact, among those diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder, there was an increased (though not statistically significant) risk of rearrest. The authors suggest this finding may be explained by the nature of substance abuse services which increase the level of surveillance over probation clients.

Findings from another recent study among female probation clients suggests that when engagement in substance abuse treatment is low, group treatment may be counterproductive to recidivism. This supports other literature that suggests individuals must be willing and ready to change for treatment to be effective. Goodson et al. (2020) found that the impact of peer support on recidivism (i.e., technical violations and arrest) differed depending on how engaged clients were in their treatment. Using a sample of about 200 women on probation or parole, the authors found that even though clients had higher levels of peer support, they also had higher levels of recidivism when they were not engaged in treatment.

### ***Cognitive behavioral therapy***

Research on the impact of CBT on probation revocations has found promising results. A recent study found that probation clients who received CBT were more likely to successfully complete probation (Kosson et al., 2019). Kosson et al. (2019) evaluated the efficacy of the Lake County, Illinois Thinking for a Change (T4C) program. While groups of 8–12 probation clients typically receive 22 weeks of treatment in T4C, this program reduced the number to 20 weeks and slightly modified the program materials to better suit higher-risk probation clients. The study examined 164 high- and medium-risk probation clients (2002–2004 cohort) and a control group consisting of 103 similarly situated clients (1997–2000 cohort). The evaluation found that only about 18% of probation clients in the control group completed probation in contrast to ~54% of clients who received CBT treatment. In an earlier study comparing the outcomes of 71 treatment group probation clients and 71 control group clients following their voluntary participation in a T4C, Golden (2002) found that program participants were no less likely to be revoked for technical violations. However, revocation for new offenses decreased 33% for participants who completed the program (Golden, 2002).

Research examining the impact of CBT programs on recidivism more generally have also revealed positive results. Studies both in the U.S. and the United Kingdom relying on randomized and quasi-experimental designs have found recidivism rates were significantly

reduced among clients who completed a CBT program (Barnes et al., 2017; Hatcher et al., 2012; Hollin et al., 2008; Lowenkamp et al., 2009). One study with more mixed results found that there was no significant overall difference in re-conviction between clients who were or were not assigned to a CBT program (McGuire et al., 2008). However, further analyses did suggest a potential treatment effect among moderate- to high-risk clients. Importantly, one additional study indicates that CBT programs may not produce improved outcomes among female clients (Palmer et al., 2015). The authors suggest that certain CBT programs may not be gender responsive with regard to targeting relevant criminogenic needs or in terms of the method of delivery.

Some programming has also produced successful results using a combination of CBT and other practices like reduced probation caseloads in an evidence-based setting. Several have suggested that the combination of intensified supervision and CBT is key to program success as previous research indicates intensive supervision alone is not effective (Farrington & Welsh, 2005; Gendreau et al., 2000; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005). However, a multi-site evaluation of programs in Oklahoma and Iowa has produced mixed results. Jalbert et al. (2011) examination of Oklahoma's program found a statistically significant reduction in recidivism rates for participants, as well as moderately increased revocation rates. Similarly, a 6-month follow-up in Iowa showed program participants in were significantly less likely (26%) to recidivate in the following years; however, they were also more likely to have their probation revoked during their participation (Jalbert et al., 2011). The authors suggest that increased supervision may have resulted in the observed increase in technical violations.

## Discussion

Despite increased reliance on probation in recent years as an alternative to incarceration, adult probation clients often end up experiencing incarceration due to revocations. As such, understanding factors which lead to revocations is crucial to informing probation policy and practice. This rapid review examined 50 studies on the effects of probation officer behaviors, PO-client relationships, caseload size and supervision intensity, legal financial obligations, client characteristics, and programming and services on adult probation revocations.

Studies of PO behavior and PO-client relationships suggest that the use of rewards and sanctions and the presence of PO-client relationships which involve trust, respect, supportiveness, and empathy appear to be linked with improved supervision outcomes. However, beyond the use of rewards and sanctions, little research has explored what kinds of PO behaviors may be effective in reducing revocations. Further, we know little about factors which influence PO decision making in response to client noncompliance. For example, what influences a PO to issue a verbal warning rather than a formal violation? Future research in this vein may better inform strategies to reduce revocations.

Research exploring the influence of supervision intensity and caseload size has generally found that intensive supervision programs (ISPs) lead to poorer supervision outcomes due to increased detection of problematic behavior. On the other hand, studies examining the effectiveness of reduced supervision intensity for low-risk clients have found that this strategy can reduce revocations without negatively impacting criminal behavior. Additionally, the use of smaller caseload sizes appears to improve supervision outcomes.

While the body of literature on ISPs is sizable, just two studies in our review explored the use of reduced supervision intensity for low-risk clients. Thus, more research in this area is warranted to confirm the efficacy of this strategy. Further, while several studies indicate that reduced caseload sizes are effective, these studies typically focus on specialty mental health caseloads or small caseloads with intensive supervision. Future research exploring the effectiveness of other smaller, specialty caseloads like substance use disorder, and domestic violence caseloads would also be informative.

Monetary sanctions increase the chances of probation failure, particularly when rates are higher and when clients are unable to pay. Research has also indicated that clients who are Black, male, and those who have lower levels of education are more likely to have negative probation outcomes. Research is lacking however, in terms of how client characteristics interact with other factors to influence probation outcomes. For instance, do monetary sanctions moderate the influence of a client's race on probation revocations? It is possible that low-income clients and clients of color are less able to pay monetary sanctions leading to greater revocation rates. Similarly, future research should investigate whether clients with different racial, ethnic, class, and gender characteristics respond differently to various supervision strategies, programming, and services. Some research for example, has indicated that female probation clients may not benefit from programming which has improved outcomes for male clients (Palmer et al., 2015). Similar results may be found with regard to other client characteristics and in other supervision strategies.

Research on programming and services has found mixed results when investigating whether substance abuse treatment improves probation outcomes. It is unclear to what extent increased surveillance in substance abuse treatment programs explains failure rates. CBT programs however, have generally been shown to have a positive influence on program outcomes. Further investigation into the intensity and duration of CBT needed to produce these positive outcomes would also be useful.

The findings from this review suggest several implications for probation policy and practice. First, given that monetary sanctions are associated with probation failure, particularly when amounts are higher and clients are unable to pay, policies surrounding monetary sanctions should be reconsidered. Courts and supervision agencies should reduce the total amount of monetary sanctions assessed to justice-involved individuals. Criminal justice agencies should also improve ability to pay assessments. Prior research suggests that such assessments are often inadequate, if completed at all (Brett et al., 2020). Reduced monetary sanction assessments, particularly among those who are less able to pay may reduce probation revocations. POs can also work with clients who are struggling to pay by creating budgets, aiding in employment searches, and finding ways to lower payments (e.g., fee waivers) when necessary. POs should also ensure clients are aware that they are unlikely to be revoked for nonpayment alone. Clear communication on this policy would help to prevent situations where a client avoids their PO or the court and accumulates other violations (i.e., FTAs) that are more likely to lead to revocation.

Second, this review implies several key points about specific supervision strategies. Probation agencies should avoid ISPs, except in the context of smaller caseloads. ISPs on their own, appear to increase rates of probation failure via enhanced surveillance and detection of client noncompliance. Further, while more research is warranted on the effectiveness of reduced supervision intensity for low-risk clients, studies which are available suggest that this approach can be effective in reducing revocations without risking



increased criminal behavior. Use of this reduced supervision intensity strategy could free up time and energy of POs which may facilitate the use of smaller and specialty caseloads that have been shown to be associated with improved probation outcomes.

Lastly, the research on programming and services suggests that probation agencies should consider using CBT programs and should take thoughtful approaches to substance abuse treatment programs. Studies of CBT programs have largely been associated with improved probation outcomes. Agencies using such programs should, however, consider developing versions of the program that specifically target the criminogenic needs of female clients (Palmer et al., 2015). Agencies utilizing substance abuse treatment programs should also be aware that the increased surveillance associated with these programs may increase violations. It may be beneficial for supervision agencies to be more tolerant of such violations in the interest of the client's successful probation completion. Additionally, based on results of prior research (Rodriguez & Webb, 2007), and RNR principles, substance abuse treatment programs should be primarily targeted toward higher risk clients and those who are willing to engage in treatment.

In all, there remain many unanswered questions about precisely how and why adult probation clients experience revocations and as to the best supervision approaches to prevent revocations. It is our hope that this review helps to synthesize prior research on the factors associated with probation revocations in order to inform probation practices and current critical debates related to criminal legal processing while also helping to guide future research in this area.

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